

**For more information contact the:**

Texas Department of State Health Services  
Health Assessment & Toxicology Group  
1100 West 49th Street, MC 1964  
Austin, Texas 78756  
1-800-588-1248  
<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/epitox.shtm>

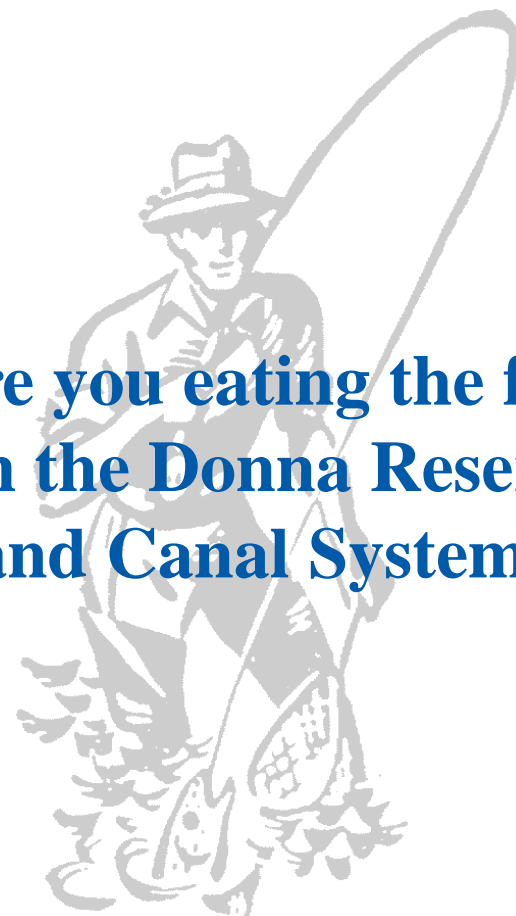


**For more information about fish advisories  
or bans in Texas contact the:**

Seafood and Aquatic Life Group  
<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/seafood/default.shtm>  
512-834-6757

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**Are you eating the fish  
from the Donna Reservoir  
and Canal System?**



**Why shouldn't I eat the fish from Donna Reservoir and  
Canal System?**

Eating fish that contain high levels of PCBs may affect your health.

Since 1993, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) have been found in a lot of fish caught in the waters of the Donna Reservoir and Canal System.

In 1994, the Texas Department of Health declared that the Donna Reservoir and Canal System was a prohibited area for the possession of any fish species.

## What are PCBs?

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are a group of 209 synthetic chemical compounds which are colorless and odorless. From 1929 to 1977 PCBs were manufactured in the United States and widely used in electrical equipment and other industrial uses. Due to the harm PCBs cause to humans and wildlife, their manufacture was stopped in the U.S. in 1977.



## How are people exposed to PCBs?

PCBs are found primarily in lake and river bottom sediments and fatty tissues in fish. Eating contaminated fish remains the major dietary source of PCB exposure (especially fish caught in contaminated lakes or rivers).

## How do PCBs affect human health?

PCBs are stored in the fat of animals and humans. PCBs and other contaminants can accumulate in the body over time. It may take months or years of regularly eating contaminated fish to build up amounts that may affect your health.

Mothers who eat highly contaminated fish before birth may have children who have slower mental development and difficulty learning. A pregnant woman can pass these chemicals to her unborn child and to the new baby through breast milk. However, the significant benefits of breastfeeding far outweigh the associated risks. Young children may also experience developmental health effects.



Adults should also be concerned about PCBs because they may cause liver and immune system problems, including cancer.

## How can I reduce my health risks to PCBs?

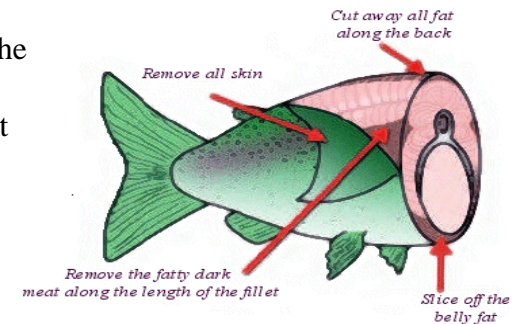
The best way to reduce the health risks is to eat only the safest fish. Some recommendations may be:

- ✓ Do not eat fish that come from the Donna Reservoir and Canal System.
- ✓ Release larger, older fish like bass, common carp, buffalo and catfish. These fish tend to have more PCBs.
- ✓ Advise women of childbearing age, pregnant women, nursing mothers and young children to limit the amount of fish they eat.

## Will cooking the fish eliminate the PCBs?

Because PCBs are mainly stored in the fat, it is not possible to remove or cook away all of the PCBs in the fish. However, if you choose to eat these fish then choose smaller and younger fish. The following are some steps you can take to reduce the amount of PCBs you may eat. We recommend that you:

- ✓ Clean and gut the fish, always trim off the fat, remove the skin, and fillet the fish before cooking it. Fat is located along the back and the belly, and in the dark meat along the lateral line running along the side of the fish. Skinning fish will remove the thin layer of fat under the skin.



- ✓ You should use cooking methods such as baking or grilling that allow the juices to drain away, and then discard the cooking juices. Using these methods may help eliminate about half or more of the PCBs in fish.